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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRISTINA 000531

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DEPT FOR DRL, INL, EUR/SCE, AND EUR/SSA, NSC FOR BRAUN,
USUN FOR DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI, USOSCE FOR STEVE STEGER

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [UNMIK](#) [YI](#)
SUBJECT: KOSOVO: KOSOVO SERB MODERATES FLOAT
DECENTRALIZATION PROPOSAL

Classified By: COM Philip S. Goldberg for reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Moderate Kosovo Serb politicians, led by Oliver Ivanovic, are floating a decentralization plan calling for seven new Serb-majority municipalities and the enlargement of an eighth. Briefing Contact Group representatives on June 16, Ivanovic said his plan differs from the proposal of the Belgrade negotiating team in not insisting that every Kosovo Serb live in a Serb-majority municipality and in not linking contiguous Serb-majority municipalities to the Serbian boundary. He said the plan differs from the Pristina proposal in creating an additional urban municipality (Lipjan) for Kosovo Serbs and in more overtly targeting resource-rich areas. Finally, he said the plan differs from both the Belgrade and Pristina plans by not treating Mitrovica as a particularly special case and by creating several submunicipal units with limited competencies in majority-Serb areas that do not meet the population threshold for formation of municipalities. Ivanovic said his group will not be putting its proposal in writing for fear of pre-empting Belgrade negotiators and asked for Contact Group help in persuading Serbian Prime Minister Kostunica to grant the proposal a full hearing. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Kosovo Serb politicians Oliver Ivanovic and Randjel Nojkic, both of the moderate Serbian List for Kosovo and Metohija (SLKM), briefed Pristina-based Contact Group reps on June 16 on a SLKM decentralization proposal calling for seven new municipalities and the expansion of the existing Serb-majority municipality of Novo Brdo. Ivanovic characterized the proposal as a more concrete version of an idea first floated at the Kosovo Government-sponsored interethnic conference in Albania last March and said SLKM has also floated it at UNOSEK. The seven new municipalities would be created by carving majority-Serb areas in Gracanica, Lipjan, Raniluk/Glllogoc, Gjilan/Partes, Kllokot/Viti, Obilic, and Mitrovica.

¶3. (C) Ivanovic said SLKM is getting active at this time because the school year is about to end and Kosovo Serb families are considering whether to register their children for the next school year in Kosovo or in Serbia. He characterized the SLKM proposal as an effort to accommodate

Pristina and Belgrade negotiators alike at the UNOSEK talks. With an eye to Pristina's concerns about the potential creation of "ethnic corridors" connecting Kosovo Serbs with Serbia via unbroken Serb-majority municipalities, he said the proposal "backs off in Kamenice" and breaks up Belgrade-proposed contiguous Serb-governed area around Gjilan (by excluding villages that border the Kosovo-Serbia administrative boundary line and by excluding villages between Kllokot in Viti/Vitina municipality and Partes in Gjilan municipality).

¶4. (C) The proposal also has several features Ivanovic believes will please Belgrade. SLKM would claim for Kosovo-Serb majority municipalities the lake in Gracanica (a main water supply for Pristina), the area around Kosovo's electricity utility (KEK) in Obilic, and most of the Trepca mining complex that straddles the Ibar River between north and south Mitrovica. Ivanovic said the SLKM proposal "goes beyond" the Belgrade proposal in one particular -- SLKM would insist on carving up Lipjan municipality to yield two urban municipalities. He explained that Serbs "are an urban people and we cannot be expected to become rural just because we are told to. I cannot understand why Belgrade has not been asking for this." Finally the proposal favors creation of several submunicipal units with limited competencies in majority-Serb areas that do not meet the population threshold for formation of municipalities.

¶5. (C) On Mitrovica, Ivanovic said "north Mitrovica has 21,000 people and meets all conditions for becoming a municipality in its own right. He cited the example of Brcko in Bosnia as illustrating the dangers of creating special cases. On questioning, he agreed that some variety of overarching board should be created between north and south

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Mitrovica but insisted that any such body should be advisory and not executive.

¶6. (C) Finally, Ivanovic allowed that the SLKM proposal is unwieldy and difficult for the international community (including UNOSEK) to consider because it has not been put in writing. He claimed that Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica and Kosovo Consultative Council chief Sanda Raskovic-Ivic were both encouraging when briefed them on the proposal, although he added that his discussion with Kostunica was "very brief." He asked that Contact Group members urge the Serbian prime minister to engage SLKM regarding the proposal.

¶7. (C) COMMENT. Although SLKM has no official standing in the final status process, we find this proposal very much food for thought and have invited Ivanovic to USOP to further elaborate it. Kosovo Albanian negotiators will doubtless be put off by the inclusion of resource-rich areas within proposed Kosovo Serb-majority municipalities. However, those resources are Kosovar rather than municipal assets, and Ivanovic appears to be looking to derive jobs for Kosovo Serbs from them rather than assert Kosovo Serb ownership over them. In that context, we credit Ivanovic with an imagination that could yet prove useful to the final status process. END COMMENT.

¶8. (U) U.S. Office Pristina clears this message for release in its entirety to U.N. Special Envoy for Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari.
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